



# *Sarah Allen*

**A Portrait Of The Heroine Mother  
Of African Methodism**

**By  
GEORGE A. SINGLETON**



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Of The

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Price 50 Cents



Dedicated to

ANNE HEATH

President of the Women's Missionary Society  
And the Women of African Methodism  
Honoring

THE BICENTENNIAL

Of the Birth of

Feb. 14, 1760—RICHARD ALLEN—Feb. 14, 1960

THE AFRICAN M. E. CHURCH REVIEW

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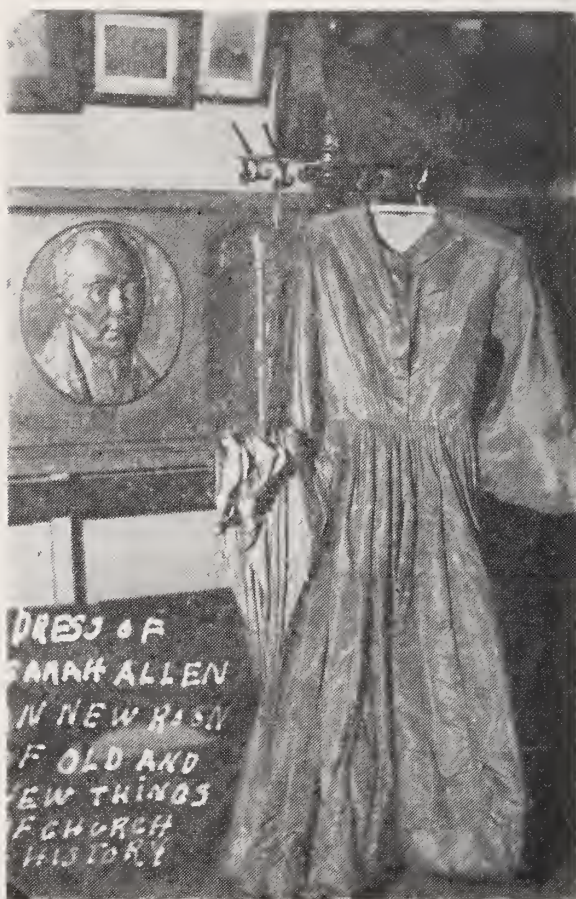
## **SARAH ALLEN**

### **A Portrait of the Heroine Mother Of African Methodism**

By **GEORGE A. SINGLETON**

Sarah Allen was born in the Isle of Wight County, Virginia, in 1764, and came into the city of Philadelphia at an early age, about eight years old. She was united in marriage to Richard Allen, the founder of The African Methodist Episcopal Church, August 18, 1801, by the Reverend Ezekiel Cooper,<sup>1</sup> pastor of Old St. George Methodist Church, Fourth and Vine Streets. She became the devoted mother of six children: Richard, Jr., Peter, John, Sarah, Anna, and James; four boys and two girls. With her husband, she was a member of Class Number One, the leader of which was Blades Wildgoose. It met every Monday night. Before her marriage, her name was Sarah, or Sallie Bass, and mentioned by Richard Allen in his treatise on the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793, at which time, he nursed the stricken patients, carried the sick to the Bush Hill Hospital, managed by Stephen Girard, and buried the dead in the cemeteries, and Potter's Field.

"Sarah Bass, a colored woman, gave all the assistance she could in several families, for which she did not receive anything; and when anything was offered her, she left it to the option of those she served."<sup>3</sup>



PICTURE OF THE DRESS, HAT AND UMBRELLA

This is a picture of Sarah Allen's dress, umbrella, and head-cover, which in those days was called a bonnet. To the left is a bronze plaque of her husband, Richard Allen. These priceless jewels are preserved in The Historical Museum of Bethel African M. E. Church, 6th and Lombard Streets, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, near the tomb which holds the remains of MOTHER ALLEN, HER HUSBAND, RICHARD, AND MORRIS BROWN.



Sarah Allen was the first woman Missionary in the African M. E. Church. When preachers came to attend the Philadelphia Annual Conference, which met in her home, she frequently served them by patching and repairing their garments in order that they might appear presentable. James Alexander Handy, who knew her wrote:

“The wife of Richard Allen, was a remarkable woman, and was a valuable help to the Bishop in his early work in the Church. After the Bishop had sent out his first preachers, they returned in a ‘seedy’ condition at the close of their first conference period of six months. Their condition was so revolting to the good Bishop that he refused to adjourn them for dinner. When he did adjourn them at night, and went home, his wife wanted an explanation as to why he had failed to bring the brethren to dinner. He stated to her their condition; she gave them supper. After supper, she seated them in the parlor, while she visited the sisters. In describing their condition, she said they had ventilators in their elbows, ventilators at their knees and ventilators in the seat of their trousers. She and the sisters bought a bolt of homespun cloth, and spent the night sewing. The next morning, they had pants and jackets for the preachers, thereby making them presentable to go out and discharge their ministerial duties. She was faithful, and frequently helped the Bishop out of many straits in which he found himself.”<sup>3</sup>

Close and hard by the side of her dedicated, and consecrated husband she stood firmly, and encouraged

him in his stride toward religious freedom. From the time when she became the wife of "our venerable father in God, she battled mightily for the establishing of our beloved Zion. It might be well said that when contending with a powerful adversary, there was no more able advocate than Sister Allen. A staff to her husband, and a counselor and the encourager of the pioneers who, with the Bishop, labored hard to bring the Church out of captivity, and throw off her oppressors. Her name will ever be associated and endeared to the Church with those of Allen, Coker, Champion, Tapsico, Webster, Waters, Brown, and others, founders and fathers of this branch of the Church of Christ.

Mother Allen lived to a good old age, being eighty-five years when she was called from labor to reward," July 16th, 1849. "We have known our sister long. We have cherished the loveliest sentiments of regards towards her; never have we known her to be remiss in a single duty which claimed her attention. To the young, she was a faithful counselor; the gay, the giddy, the careless and heedless met in Mother Allen one who was faithful to advise even unto tears. The aged met a friend sincere and true, without ostentation, but simple-minded, frank and affectionate. To Mother Allen all had access; the high, the low, the rich and poor. The friendless and the out-cast found in her one unto whom they could pour out their complaints, and tell their sorrows o'er. The poor fleeing slave, trembling and panting in his flight, has lost a friend not easily replaced; her purse

to such as well as others was ever open, and the fire of those eyes, now closed in death, kindled with peculiar brightness as she would bid them Godspeed to the land of liberty, when the slave is free from his master, and the voice of the oppressor is no longer heard.

Her house was the resort of the brethren who labored in the ministry; when weary and worn with the burdens of duty, they found a resting-place indeed. Long will her motherly counsel be remembered by our itinerant and local brethren, and long will it be, yea, ever, that the tones of her well known voice shall sound upon the ear of the ministers of our Church.

As it regards to her Christian profession, we may say that such was the reflection thrown from it that no one could for a moment question or doubt that she walked with God. The power of which was felt as often as she opened her mouth either to rebuke, to counsel, or encourage. In the Church truly a void has been made; a great light, indeed, has been blown out; and Zion, our beloved Zion, will long mourn the loss of Mother Allen.

In conclusion we can only say, Fare thee well, Sister, thy happy spirit hath winged its way, Far, far away.

Now, even now, thou art happier far away than any of earth's sons whose pilgrimage journey ends not yet. We bid thee farewell. We hope to meet thee

yet, where parting can no more take place; we hope to meet thee in white, and in the upper sanctuary comingle once again and forever our voices in anthems of praise to Him who hath loved us and given Himself for us. Fare thee well, Sister.”<sup>4</sup>

William Paul Quinn

Noah C. W. Cannon

Jeffry G. Beulah

Israel Scott

Morris Brown

John Cornish

Such as the expressed high esteem in which Mother Allen was held by her contemporaries who knew, and admired her personally. Beneath her hospitable roof, and at her welcome table, 150 Spruce Street, many prominent, outstanding men were housed and fed; such as Dr. Thomas Coke, the first Bishop elected at the Christmas Conference, 1784 at Baltimore, Maryland, and Francis Asbury, “The Prophet of the Long Trail,” who ordained Allen to preach, dedicated Bethel, Sixth and Lombard Streets, and delivered several sermons from the sacred pulpit, which is preserved in the Historical Museum Room; Benjamin Rush,<sup>5</sup> a leading Philadelphian, renowned physician, and one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, whose name appears on the time-honored document beneath that of the celebrated Benjamin Franklin, “the philosopher of the American Revolution.” Benjamin Rush was Richard Allen’s dear friend, and encouraged him as he came out of Old St. George; and aided him in establishing

Bethel. Robert Ralston, the Treasurer of the Building Fund was an Elder in the Presbyterian Church, and a Trustee of Princeton University; William Culbert, Jonas Moore, Charles Cavender, Lorenzo Dow, and scores of other white men, ministers, and leaders. Class meetings were held in the home, and Mother Allen participated. She helped to make it a source of spiritual power. As her husband worked with his hands as a cobbler, and to acquire real estate, she supported him.

Sarah Allen, the consecrated Mother of African Methodism, purchased the first copy "THE JOURNAL OF JERENNA LEE,"<sup>6</sup> the pioneer woman preacher in the Church. It was she who spearheaded the movement of men and women of God down through the years to observe the BICENTENNIAL of her husband's birth, with whom she cooperated fully in laying the foundation upon which it stands to-day. She is in history, and shall forever remain the Mother of African Methodism. The women of the Church look to her through Lucy M. Hughes, Christine S. Smith, Mary Handy, Fannie Jackson Coppin, Katie Stella Campbell Beckett, Lucretia H. Newman, Annie Dickerson, Doritha Hill, Priscilla Baltimore, Sarah Jane Woodson Early, Fannie E. W. Harper, Amanda Smith, Sarah Gorham, Wilda Delaney Robinson, and a host of 'certain other women who passed this way,' and are now 'singing around the throne.' Hail to thee, SARAH ALLEN, THE HEROINE MOTHER! The Church has produced many, but she excels

them all. In spite of death she lives, and her remains repose with those of her husband, and Morris Brown in the tomb at Bethel, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her memory is enshrined upon the heights.



EZEKIEL COOPER

He was pastor of Old St. George Methodist Church, Philadelphia, and united Sarah, and Richard Allen in Holy Matrimony August 18th 1801. Often he preached at Mother Bethel, and was entertained in the home of the Allens. He strongly opposed slavery, and lived to be eighty-four years old when he passed from labor to reward.





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The cover carries the portrait of Sarah Allen, the wife of the celebrated founder of The African Methodist Episcopal Church, for forty-eight years, until she gave her soul unto the God of all life.

The cover carries the portrait of Sarah Allen, the "Mother Heroine of African Methodism." It was preserved and handed down across the years by the eminent historian Benjamin W. Arnett, onetime Financial Secretary of the Church, elected a Bishop in 1888, and author of several books of lasting value.